

Annual State Goals and Reports of Progress

State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Strategies to Achieve the Goals and Priorities of the Division

The State Plan Attachment 4.12(c) identifies 11 goals established by the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. These goals are related to assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain good jobs, economic self-sufficiency, personal independence, and full inclusion into the community. The strategies listed below are key steps in accomplishing these goals.

- Strategy 1.1:** The Division will increase the average consumer's earnings over the next three years by monitoring the average wage earning by disability priority categories consistent with the order of selection. .
- Strategy 1.2:** The Division will annually recognize counselors whose consumers have obtained employment with high earnings and received employer paid benefits.
- Strategy 1.3:** The Division will develop procedures and policies to follow-up with individuals employed six and twelve months after case closure to access job stability and satisfaction.
- Strategy 1.4:** The Division will increase the variety of employment options available for consumers (i.e., develop and strengthen linkages with larger corporations, businesses and the Federal Government to increase job placement opportunities.).
- Strategy 1.5:** Increase the number of self-employment closures and improve the supports that are available for consumers who choose self-employment outcomes by reviewing policies and practices that address the working relationship with the Small Business Administration and take steps to strengthen that relationship.
- Strategy 1.6:** Expand the use of private providers and other providers to serve consumers in rural communities by increasing public awareness of the availability of these providers and assist the providers in developing marketing strategies.
- Strategy 1.7:** Develop a more effective way of recruiting additional providers by utilizing existing providers.

- Strategy 2.1:** Each District Office will become an active member of their local Chamber of Commerce and economic development organization.
- Strategy 2.2:** The Division will develop techniques to directly market consumers to employers.
- Strategy 2.3:** Conduct training's on the ADA in collaboration with other entities (i.e., BVR, SDCCD, and SDAS) to groups such as State and local Workforce Development councils to take the fear out of hiring people with disabilities.
- Strategy 2.4:** The Division will promote representation of individuals with disabilities on the local Workforce Development Councils and local Chamber of Commerce.

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- Strategy 2.5:** The Division and the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired will support employment initiatives of the Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with disabilities.
- Strategy 3.1:** The Division will continue to work cooperatively with local mental health centers to provide short-term and long-term vocational supports for people with mental illness by reviewing the language of the current cooperative agreements to ensure it’s implementation and expand it to include Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.
- Strategy 3.2:** The Division will continue to promote the utilization of supported education for individuals with mental illness and traumatic brain injuries (TBI) by promoting consumer success stories.
- Strategy 3.3:** Improve employment opportunities and community supports for people with TBI by increasing counselors’ awareness and understanding of TBI.
- Strategy 3.4:** Division will continue to focus on program expansion and increased resources in serving consumers who are deaf and blind.
- Strategy 3.5:** The Division will continue to support performance based contracts with mental health centers and explore the possibility of increasing these types of contracts. Model contracts will allow consumers faster and easier access to vocational rehabilitation services.
- Strategy 4.1:** Students who choose post-secondary education will be prepared and have the supports necessary to succeed.(i.e., implement an IEP/transition goal for the student to contact the Disability Coordinator of the college they chose prior to attending post-secondary education).
- Strategy 4.2:** Increase the utilization of situational assessments to assist consumers in making good decisions.
- Strategy 4.3:** The Division will annually co-sponsor, the Youth Leadership Program to enhance the leadership skills of DVR students with disabilities.
- Strategy 4.4:** The Division will continue to work closely with the South Dakota Transition Project to provide training for Division staff and adult service providers on Transition Services (i.e., identifying students with hidden disabilities such as learning disabilities, substance abuse, ADHD, etc.).
- Strategy 4.5:** The Division will sponsor students with disabilities to attend “Navigating the Future”, a comprehensive program on resources and supports to assist students with a disabilities to transition smoothly to post-secondary programs.
- Strategy 4.6:** By October of 2000, The Division will identify new methods of providing consumer orientation and information.
- Strategy 4.7:** By October of 1999, The Division will develop a draft policy on consumer choice. This policy will pertain to choice of counselors and choice of service providers.

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- Strategy 4.8:** The Division will develop policies and procedures within 60 days after issuance of regulations to offer assistance and training so consumers can develop the necessary skills to develop and manage their rehabilitation plan and to make informed choices.
- Strategy 4.9:** The Division will develop a checklist to identify supports often needed by students choosing to attend post-secondary education.
- Strategy 5.1:** The Division will evaluate the agency's past and current performance in meeting the established Standards and Performance Indicators.
- Strategy 5.2:** The Standards and Performance Indicators will be calculated at the District Office level and used in determining the office's performance and District Supervisor's evaluations.
- Strategy 5.3:** Actions will be taken to improve Performance Indicators (State and District Office level) falling below or close to the minimum standard.
- Strategy 5.4:** The Division will explore new methods of gathering consumer satisfaction information necessary to evaluate consumer satisfaction as stipulated by Federal Regulations.
- Strategy 6.1:** The Division will implement a new case management system that will allow staff to do case work at the consumer's home or at the provider's location.
- Strategy 6.2:** The Division will revise and update the counselor manual and continue streamlining processes.
- Strategy 6.3:** The District Offices will report to the State Office on specific strategies regarding how they have enhanced their working relationship with the local job service office.
- Strategy 6.4:** The Division will assist in developing a statewide network for consumers who are self-employed and want to share their expertise with others to offer peer support and promotion of businesses.
- Strategy 7.1:** The Division will review the current Financial Needs Policy and make changes necessary to improve consistency.
- Strategy 7.2:** The Division will provide training to all staff on determining the financial needs of consumers.
- Strategy 7.3:** The Division will incorporate the Financial Need criteria into the new case management system. This will allow the Division to determine financial impact of changes in the area of financial need and assure that a financial needs test is being provided annually for services requiring a needs test.
- Strategy 7.4:** The Division will provide training to post-secondary education staff on the Financial Needs Policy for tuition and fees.

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- Strategy 8.1:** The Division will continue promoting the use of Situational Evaluations for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Strategy 8.2:** The Division will establish new guidelines for counselors on service levels necessary in order to ensure that hard to serve consumers are successful in the supported employment model.
- Strategy 8.3:** Each District Office will submit a plan to the State Office which identifies the rural communities which lack services and develop specific strategies to meet the identified unmet needs of these communities (i.e., utilize teacher as a job coach in summer months; better working relationship with existing resources; utilize providers to cover territories).
- Strategy 9.1:** The Division will update the cooperative agreements with each 121 Native American Project and ensure a liaison is identified for each Project.
- Strategy 9.2:** The Division will provide technical assistance to the Native American Nations without 121 Projects when applying for Vocational Rehabilitation grant funding.
- Strategy 9.3:** The Division will participate in Native American Summits and encourage dialogue with the 121 Projects and members of other Native American Nations.
- Strategy 9.4:** Fully utilize 121 Projects for provision of services on reservations and explore an expanded role, such as technical assistance and services for Native Americans living off reservations.
- Strategy 9.5:** The Division will continue to inform staff of 121 Projects of state funded training initiatives and extend an invitation for their participation.
- Strategy10.1:** The Division will explore how caseload size impacts the quality of services provided to consumers and counselors ability to provide services in a timely manner.
- Strategy10.2:** Increase public awareness and relations on what Vocational Rehabilitation is.
- Strategy10.3:** The Division will continue working with the Department of Labor in providing work stations where consumers can use the internet to access information on the Division.
- Strategy10.4:** The Division will explore contracting with consumers to develop informational tools to promote Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- Strategy11.1:** In coordination with the SD Transition Project, develop a strategies and best practices for VR Counselors in providing services for transition students.
- Strategy11.2:** The Division and the Office of Special Education will designate a main point of contact for both agencies when dealing with Transition Services.
- Strategy11.3:** The Division will work with the Office of Special Education to develop a means to continue services provided by the SD Transition Project after their grant has ended.
- Strategy11.4:** The Division will conduct transition case file reviews in coordination with the Office of Special Education when they are providing monitoring reviews of school systems.

Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities

South Dakota's racial mix consists of 92.5% white/Caucasian, 7% Native American and .5% all other racial groups. Native Americans represent the only significant minority group in South Dakota. South Dakota has seven separate tribal reservations with autonomous governing bodies. Collectively they represent the Great Sioux Nation and share a common culture and language. Typically these reservations are very rural, isolated, with high poverty, and high unemployment rates. Nearly half of all Native Americans in South Dakota live on reservations.

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has counselors who serve each of the reservation areas. These counselors meet with local Indian Health Services and tribal government staff to identify potential referrals. Generally staff work out of tribal offices when meeting with consumers on reservations. Native Americans living on reservations face unique challenges. First, they are eligible for a combination of tribal, federal and state programs to meet their vocational and health care needs. This requires extensive coordination and cooperation between agencies. Secondly, they are faced with significant cultural and economic barriers. Unemployment on South Dakota's reservations varies from 70 % to 80%. There is very little private employment. Most individuals are employed by either tribal or federal governments.

South Dakota is fortunate to have four 121 Projects. This has greatly improved access to vocational rehabilitation services for those Native Americans served by these 121 Projects. The Division has established an on-going working relationship with each of the 121 Projects. We have assigned a counselor to work with each Project to assist them in program development. Native American consumers living on reservations have the choice of either being served by the 121 Project, the state unit or jointly by both programs. We encourage consumers to be served either by the 121 Project or jointly by both projects. The 121 Projects have a better grasp of the cultural and the service delivery barriers that exist on reservations. The state agency has access to specialized programs and services which are not feasible for a 121 Project to maintain. On those reservations where a 121 Project exists, the Division does not plan to conduct extensive outreach activities. This function can more effectively be conducted by the 121 Projects. Our efforts will be to network with the 121 Projects to ensure that Native American consumers have access to the full range of vocational rehabilitation services. SBVI has a formal cooperative agreement with each 121 Project.

A number of Native American consumer organizations have developed in the state. The Division works closely with these organizations to identify special needs and strategies to meet these needs. One of these organizations, Tateya Topa Ho, is an independent living center serving all seven reservations. Working in conjunction with the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Division has expanded its financial support for this organization. This organization has local liaisons on each reservation who refer directly to vocational rehabilitation. The Quad Squad is a consumer based organization on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The Division works directly with this organization to identify and serve potential consumers.

The Division has participated in the Dine' Project. This is an RSA sponsored short-term training program for state agencies serving significant Native American populations. This Project involved training state agency administrative staff on policies that tend to discourage Native American participation in the VR process. It also provided training directly to counselors on case service practices that are respectful to cultural differences, yet promote successful outcomes for Native American consumers. The Board of SBVI and the Division of SBVI have submitted the names of each of the directors of the 121 Projects to the Governor's office with a request to appoint one director to the Board of SBVI as required by the Rehabilitation Act.

During the past two years, the Division has participated in the Native American Disability Summits. Approximately 150 people attended the summit on June 23-25, 1999. The Director of SBVI and Interim Director of DRS are both participated in this year's summit. The summit creates an opportunity for participants to identify and discuss the unmet needs of people with disabilities on their nation. Strategies and goals to address the unmet needs were developed for each specific nation. Since the first summit in 1997, the following achievements have been met as a result of these Native American Disability Summits:

- ✓ More Accessible housing, including modifications of homes;
- ✓ More accessible transportation;
- ✓ Expansion of education on all disability issues;
- ✓ Better understanding of services available for individuals with disabilities;
- ✓ Increase in awareness of Assistive Technology Devices and Services;
- ✓ Individuals gained self-advocacy skills;
- ✓ Enforcement's of Laws & Policies for individuals with disabilities;
- ✓ Support groups initiated on several nations;
- ✓ Prevention awareness including safety, FAS/FAE; and
- ✓ Awareness to policymakers for the need for expansion of Assistive Living.

Overcome Barriers to Equitable Access to and Participation in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs

The Division has been proactive in overcoming barriers for applicants and consumers to access and participate in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs. Follow is a list of key activities implemented to assure equitable access:

- All District Offices are in accessible locations.
- All District Offices have a TTY and advertise this number to consumers and providers.
- All SBVI public meetings are held in locations that are physically accessible to people with disabilities.
- All applicants and consumers are informed that alternative formats for information (Braille, diskette, large print, and auxiliary aids and reasonable accommodations) are available upon request for all Division events.
- The Division makes special efforts to provide interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, individuals who speak foreign languages, and individuals who speak Lakota, Dakota or Nakota.

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- The Division participates in a “Loss Control Committee”. The purpose of this committee is to evaluate the accessibility and safety issues of all area offices.
 - The Division’s Internet Home Page is accessible for individuals with disabilities who may be using assistive devices to access the information. The home page was evaluated for accessibility utilizing an application called “Bobby Approved”.
 - The Division has implemented a new policy to coordinate referrals for the provision of state wide assistive technology devices and services to ensure consumers can overcome barriers they encounter during the rehabilitation process.
 - The Division is participating in a work group to help ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. This will ensure that electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained or used by the state is accessible to people with disabilities.
 - The Division supports a telecommunication adaptive devices (TAD) program for free distribution of accessible telephone equipment to South Dakota residents with disabilities.
 - Division staff are working with all partners in the Work Investment Act one-stop centers to assure physical access, program access and services access.

Future Utilization of Innovation and Expansion Funds

Section 101 (a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended requires the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to reserve and use a portion of the funds for:

- (i) the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State; and
- (ii) to support of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has reserved a budgeted amount for the utilization of the Innovation and Expansion for the State Fiscal Year 2000. These funds will be used for the following activities:

- ✓ Support the cost of the Board of SBVI. This includes staff cost, accommodations and other direct costs involved in VR Board activities.
- ✓ Initiatives approved by the Board of SBVI to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State.
- ✓ Support the functions of the Board of SBVI as described in Section 105 (c) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- ✓ Improve use of assistive technology services and devices through the assistive technology advisory committee and collaboration with the assistive technology systems change project.
- ✓ Establishment, development and improvement of community rehabilitation programs.
- ✓ Improvement in service provision as measured through standards and indicators.
- ✓ Assist partners in the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

